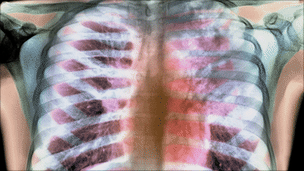
21 April 2011 Last updated at 02:32

**BBC**

**TB screening 'missing most cases'**



Current screening for TB in immigrants arriving in the UK is missing the majority of cases, say researchers.

Using new blood tests for checks would be better than chest X-rays, which detect only active infections, says an Imperial College London team which analysed more than 1,000 immigrants.

Blood tests could prevent substantial numbers of cases, they write in The Lancet Infectious Diseases.

The government said the research backed new guidance from health watchdog NICE.

Tuberculosis is caused by a bacterial infection, which attacks the lungs.

It has risen dramatically in the UK over the past decade, partly because of an increase in cases among people who move to the country from overseas.

Immigrants arriving in the UK from countries with a high incidence of TB are required to have a chest X-ray on arrival to check for TB.

But this screening method can miss cases where the infection lies dormant in the lungs and does not cause symptoms.

Professor Ajit Lalvani, of Imperial College London, argues that new blood tests should be used to pick-up cases where people are carrying TB infection but will not develop it for several years.

His research is based on an analysis of more than 1,000 immigrants at centres in London, Leeds and Blackburn.

He said: "By treating people at that early stage, we can prevent them from developing a serious illness and becoming infectious.

"Crucially, this wider screening could substantially reduce TB incidence while remaining cost-effective.

Our findings provide the missing evidence-base for the new national strategy to expand immigrant screening."

NICE updated its guidelines on TB screening in March.

Latent infections

A spokesperson for the Department of Health said: "We are pleased that this research backs up the latest NICE guidance on TB screening.

"We expect the local NHS to consider the best ways of tackling this issue in their area."

Dr John Moore-Gillon, vice-president of the British Lung Foundation and a TB specialist, said: "In the past 20 years, rates of tuberculosis (TB) have been falling in virtually every developed country, except the UK where they have been rising rapidly.

"This research highlights the importance of identifying those individuals with latent TB infection, before they become ill themselves and potentially dangerous to others.

"Untreated TB leads to many unnecessary deaths and a great deal of suffering, and if this new approach to screening is adopted we may at last move towards reducing TB in this country."

Independent.co.uk

April 21, 2011 Thursday 8:22 AM GMT

**Tests on immigrants 'miss most TB'**  
**BYLINE:** By Lucy Bogustawski, PA  
  
**SECTION:** HEALTH NEWS  
  
**LENGTH:** 401 words

Screening procedures for tuberculosis in immigrants in the UK are missing the majority of cases, new research has revealed.

Using new blood checks rather than chest X-rays would detect over 90% of imported latent TB, experts said, as opposed to the current failure to detect more than 70% of cases of latent infection.

A team of researchers at Imperial College London said new methods of blood testing would mean that people with imported latent TB could be given a course of antibiotics to prevent them from developing an active form of the disease.

TB is caused by a bacterial infection which is normally asymptomatic, but around one in 10 infections leads to active disease, which attacks the lungs and kills around half of people affected.

The incidence of TB has risen dramatically in Britain over the last decade, particularly because of a 98% increase in cases among people who move to the country from overseas, the research said.

Current UK policy requires all immigrants from countries with a TB incidence higher than 40 in 100,000 people per year to have a chest X-ray on arrival to check for active TB, although very few immigrants have the active disease on arrival.

However, a substantial proportion of immigrants are carriers of latent TB which, though initially silent and non-infectious, often progresses to full-blown TB within a few years of arrival in the UK, researchers said.

Professor Ajit Lalvani, director of the Tuberculosis Research Unit at Imperial College London, who led the study, said: "By treating people at that early stage, we can prevent them from developing a serious illness and becoming infectious.

"Crucially, this wider screening could substantially reduce TB incidence while remaining cost-effective.

Our findings provide the missing evidence-base for the new national strategy to expand immigrant screening."

His research, which was funded by the Wellcome Trust and the Medical Research Council, analysed results from over 1,200 recent immigrants at centres using new blood tests to screen for latent TB in London, Leeds and Blackburn.

The study found that a fifth of recent immigrants from the Indian Subcontinent and almost 30% from Sub-Saharan Africa are carriers of latent TB and that national screening policy, which does not include immigrants from the Indian Subcontinent, has been missing 70% of imported latent TB.

Press Association Mediapoint

April 21, 2011 Thursday 8:13 AM BST

**TESTS ON IMMIGRANTS 'MISS MOST TB'**  
**BYLINE:** Lucy Bogustawski, Press Association  
  
**SECTION:** HOME NEWS  
  
**LENGTH:** 577 words

Screening procedures for tuberculosis in immigrants in the UK are missing the majority of cases, new research has revealed.

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The study found that a fifth of recent immigrants from the Indian Subcontinent and almost 30% from Sub-Saharan Africa are carriers of latent TB and that national screening policy, which does not include immigrants from the Indian Subcontinent, has been missing 70% of imported latent TB.

A Department of Health spokesman said: ``Tuberculosis is a global problem and sustained action is needed to detect, diagnose and treat cases earlier.

``We are funding TB Alert, the UK's national TB charity, to increase awareness of TB among primary healthcare professionals and the public.

``We are pleased that this research backs up the latest Nice (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) guidance on TB screening.

We expect the local NHS to consider the best ways of tackling this issue in their area.''

Dr John Moore-Gillon, vice-president of the British Lung Foundation, said: ``In the past 20 years, rates of tuberculosis have been falling in virtually every developed country except the UK, where they have been rising rapidly.

``This research highlights the importance of identifying those individuals with latent TB infection, before they become ill themselves and potentially dangerous to others.

``Untreated TB leads to many unnecessary deaths and a great deal of suffering, and if this new approach to screening is adopted we may at last move towards reducing TB in this country.''

**REUTERS**

**UK immigrant screening misses most latent TB: study**

Thu Apr 21, 2011 2:10am BST

British tuberculosis screening for new immigrants fails to detect most imported cases of latent disease and screening should be widened to include more people from the Indian subcontinent, scientists said on Thursday.

Britain has recently been dubbed "the tuberculosis (TB) capital of Europe" and is the only country in Western Europe with rising rates of disease.

Current British border policies require immigrants from countries with a TB incidence higher than 40 per 100,000 people to have a chest X-ray on arrival to check for active TB.

This generally covers African countries but excludes places in Asia such as India, [Pakistan](http://uk.reuters.com/places/pakistan) and Bangladesh.

TB is caused by a bacterial infection which is normally asymptomatic, but about one in 10 cases lead to active disease which attacks the lungs and kills around half of those affected.

While very few immigrants have active TB on arrival, many of them are carriers of the latent disease, which often progresses to active TB within a few years of their arrival in Britain.

To see whether the screening was effective, British researchers analyzed demographic and test result data from 2008 to 2010 at three immigrant screening centers in Britain using a highly specific blood test for detecting latent tuberculosis, called an interferon-gamma release assay (IGRA).

Their results, published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases journal, showed 20 percent of recent immigrants from the Indian sub-continent and almost 30 percent from sub-Saharan Africa are carriers of latent TB.

This means the current screening policy, which excludes immigrants from the Indian subcontinent, has been missing 70 percent of imported latent TB, they said.

TB is a worldwide pandemic. Among the 15 countries with the highest estimated TB incidence rates, 13 are in Africa, while a third of all new cases are in India and [China](http://uk.reuters.com/places/china), according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

The WHO also says drug-resistant TB is rapidly increasing around the world and these often fatal strains of the disease are expected to affect two million people by 2050.

COST EFFECTIVE

Britain has more than 9,000 cases of TB diagnosed a year and the problem is becoming particularly acute in the capital, which experts say accounts for 40 percent of the nation's total diagnosed cases.

In this study, the researchers also assessed how cost-effective it would be to lower the threshold so people from more countries are screened.

They found including immigrants from the Indian subcontinent would detect over 90 percent of latent TB cases, and would cost little more than now.

"By changing the threshold for screening, and including immigrants from the Indian subcontinent, we could pick up 92 percent of imported latent TB," said Ajit Lalvan from Imperial College London, who led the study.

"By treating people at that early stage, we can prevent them from developing a serious illness and becoming infectious."

The national incidence of TB has risen dramatically over the last decade, increasing by almost 50 percent between 1998 and 2009.

Much of this increase has been driven by a 98 percent increase in cases among immigrants.

Foreign-born people account for nearly three quarters of the country's TB cases, and have a 20 times higher incidence of TB than people born in Britain.

The Express

April 21, 2011 Thursday   
U.K. 3rd Edition

**Test for migrants may curb TB surge**  
**SECTION:** NEWS; 34  
  
**LENGTH:** 144 words

SEVEN in 10 immigrants carrying tuberculosis are not being diagnosed when they arrive in the UK, a new study has found.

However, scientists say that a simple blood test could solve the problem and save the NHS millions of pounds.

In recent years, the number of cases of tuberculosis has jumped by 50 per cent to almost 10,000 a year, mainly due to immigration.

Although people arriving from sub-Saharan Africa are given chest X-rays to detect TB, this can only reveal those with active disease.

Many more immigrants have the bacteria lying dormant in their bodies, known as latent TB.

Professor Ajit Lalvani, from Imperial College London, whose findings are published in The Lancet online, said the discovery could end the link between TB and immigration.

"The societal impact of this finding is that TB is no longer the inevitable cost of immigration to the UK, " he said.

The Guardian (London) - Final Edition

April 21, 2011 Thursday

**TB screening is missing 70% of latent cases: UK urged to test arrivals from Indian subcontinent X-rays fail to spot carriers, study finds, as cases double**  
**BYLINE:** Sarah Boseley Health editor  
  
**SECTION:** GUARDIAN HOME PAGES; Pg. 21  
  
**LENGTH:** 522 words

The UK should radically change its tuberculosis screening policy and include arrivals from the Indian subcontinent, which could prevent most cases of the disease, according to scientists in a paper published today.

TB is a growing problem in the UK, where cases almost doubled between 1998 and 2009, and drug-resistant forms are spreading around the globe.

Arrivals from sub-Saharan Africa are X-rayed - but the test only picks up active TB cases, of which there are very few.

UK screening has been missing 70% of latent TB - where the person is a carrier and may become ill and infect others several years later.

Scientists writing in The Lancet Infectious Diseases journal say TB screening could be more effective by using a blood test to pick up latent disease.

Professor Ajit Lalvani from Imperial College London and his colleagues studied a blood test for latent TB at three immigrant screening centres in the UK between 2008 and 2009, and collected data on the countries people had travelled from.

They discovered that 20% of recent immigrants from the Indian subcontinent and almost 30% from sub-Saharan Africa are carriers of latent tuberculosis.

They conclude that the current screening policy, which excludes immigrants from the Indian subcontinent - even though half of all active tuberculosis cases in the UK are in those populations - has been missing 70% of imported latent tuberculosis.

Changes to TB screening could pick up 92% of infected immigrants, they say, just by targeting younger people.

They recommend that anyone aged 35 or under from a country with TB prevalence of 150 cases per 100,000 people should be given the blood test for latent infection.

That would include people from the Indian sub-continent.

The change of policy, they say, would cost little more than what is spent at the moment, allowing for cases of active tuberculosis prevented.

"UK national guidance for which groups to screen has hitherto missed most immigrants with latent infection," said Lalvani.

"By changing the threshold, and including immigrants from the Indian subcontinent, we could pick up 92% of imported latent tuberculosis.

By treating people at that early stage, we can prevent them from developing a serious illness and becoming infectious.

Our findings provide the missing evidence-base for the new national strategy to expand immigrant screening."

The shadow health minister, Diane Abbott, called for immediate action.

"It is alarming that we do not have comprehensive screening at ports of entry.

I will be calling on the UK national screening committee to look at proposals for a cost-effective screening programme," she said.

"Rates of tuberculosis continue to increase in many parts of the country.

Much of this rise affects disadvantaged communities, including certain ethnic minority groups and those with social risk factors such as homelessness and drug and alcohol misuse.

"Healthcare in local areas must do more to ensure that people coming to live in the UK from high-risk countries are screened when they arrived at an airport or port, or when they registered with a GP. Students coming to Britain should also be tested."

The Times (London)  
April 21, 2011 Thursday   
Edition 1;   
National Edition

**Extra immigration checks urged as TB cases double**  
  
**BYLINE:** Chris Smyth  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 19  
  
**LENGTH:** 447 words

Britain's tuberculosis screening programme is missing most cases of infection among immigrants and failing to prevent the "relentless rise" of the disease, experts have found.

The Health Protection Agency is urging officials to act after a study found that the current screening system was missing 70 per cent of latent TB infections brought in to Britain.

At present, immigrants from countries with high tuberculosis rates are given a chest X-ray on arrival to check for active TB.

But X-rays cannot identify the far greater numbers who are symptomless carriers of the disease, which often develops to the full-blown infectious version soon after they arrive in Britain.

Only immigrants from a handful of countries in Africa are given extra checks for latent TB infection.

Using a new blood test, researchers examined 1,229 immigrants in London, Leeds and Blackburn, discovering that 20 per cent of recent arrivals from the Indian sub-continent and 30 per cent from sub-Saharan Africa were carrying the disease.

The majority of these cases were missed by existing screenings.

Tuberculosis, a deadly disease in the Victorian era, when it was known as "consumption", was once thought to have been confined to the past, as antibiotics and vaccinations cut cases in Britain.

That has since been driven into reverse by arrivals from parts of the world where the disease remains common.

More than 9,000 cases of TB were detected in Britain last year, almost 50 per cent up on a decade ago.

"There has been a relentless rise over two decades," said Professor Ajit Lalvani of Imperial College London, who led the research.

"Rates in UK-born whites have not risen.

The increase has been driven by cases in immigrants."

Latent infections can be easily eradicated with drugs, and Professor Lalvani said that better screening would "stem the tide" of tuberculosis in Britain.

"We have shown that by changing the threshold for screening, and including immigrants from the Indian sub-continent, we could pick up 92 per cent of imported latent tuberculosis," he added.

"By treating people at that early stage, we can prevent them from developing a serious illness and becoming infectious."

Ibrahim Abubakar, a TB expert at the Health Protection Agency, who also worked on the study, said that the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence had changed its guidelines as a result of the study.

"The key to reducing TB in the UK remains early diagnosis and treatment," he added.

A spokesman for the UK Border Agency said that it was reviewing the screening of new immigrants.

"This is a complex issue which does not lend itself to simple solutions. The Government is evaluating options," he said.